



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **City of San Antonio, Southwest Research Institute, USAA and UTSA launch new data-driven research and technology development program**

**SAN ANTONIO (Jan. 28, 2019)** – The City of San Antonio (CoSA), Southwest Research Institute (SwRI), The United Services Automobile Association (USAA), and The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) are aligning efforts to form the **R&D League**, a new research and development program for the City.

“The R&D League is a welcome and far-sighted approach that will help San Antonio adapt to our fast-changing world,” said Mayor Ron Nirenberg. “This public/private cooperation is another example of our city’s most valuable asset – teamwork.”

The R&D League will advise and provide tools to the City to investigate new ideas and make data-driven, equitable decisions that benefit all residents of San Antonio. Locally, USAA, SwRI and UTSA have robust R&D programs that have made them leaders in their respective fields. USAA, SwRI and UTSA will lend their talent, insight and expertise to community-focused R&D projects.

“As the Chairman of the City of San Antonio Innovation and Technology Committee, I’m excited about combining forces with R&D, a collaboration I anticipate will launch San Antonio to the forefront of a technological revolution, creating innovative solutions to real-world problems. Through collaboration with USAA, SwRI, and UTSA, the City of San Antonio will pave the way for a transformation in how we interact in City services, immediately creating a more productive and efficient place to live, work and play, said District 8 Councilman Manny Pelaez.

The R&D League will create opportunities for highly-skilled, cross-sector teams of academics, engineers, scientists and City staff to explore new ways of operating and addressing challenges. Each project team will start by testing a hypothesis and will provide a report with results, lessons learned and recommended next steps.

“The level of skill and knowledge that comes from the collaboration of these three institutions is a huge asset to San Antonio,” said City Manager Erik Walsh. “The R&D League initiative will amplify those benefits to directly improve the way our City works for everyone. I am grateful to SwRI, USAA and UTSA for their willingness to give back to their community in this way.”

The project plans will provide teams flexibility to learn along the way and adapt when necessary. If an idea is disproven, it helps all partners focus on better solutions. If an idea is successful, it allows the City to make data-informed decisions, scale as appropriate and make thoughtful plans. For SwRI, USAA and UTSA, the R&D League will expand their research capacity by utilizing the City as a living lab and making them more competitive for grant funding.

“This marks the first time the four organizations are working together in a collective, targeted fashion: San Antonio institutions addressing local civic challenges to enhance our neighborhoods and communities,” said Dr. Bernard Arulanandam, UTSA vice president for research, economic development and knowledge enterprise.

“Funding agencies now require multi-sector collaboration in their grant proposals. It’s no longer acceptable to operate in silos; game-changing solutions to societal issues come when you bring different perspectives to the table. The R&D League allows us to think in new ways and hit the ground running when grant opportunities become available,” said Steve Dellenback, VP of the Intelligent Systems Division at Southwest Research institute.

In the past six months, the alliance has developed six strategically aligned projects. The model for each project varies based on the subject-matter and scope. The six projects that the R&D League will study in 2020 include:

- 1) Sensors on City Vehicles: SwRI-led with CoSA’s Solid Waste Management and Transportation and Capital Improvements Departments, the project will collect reliable data on the City’s infrastructure and service needs to help departments proactively and strategically address need and evaluate if resources are equitably allocated.
- 2) Neighborhood Empowerment Zones Impacts Estimator: UTSA-led with CoSA’s Neighborhood and Housing Services Department, the project will build an interactive mapping tool to collect data, determine Neighborhood Empowerment Zones and track the impact of affordable housing interventions over time.
- 3) Idea Portal: CoSA Innovation-led with advisement from USAA, the project will design and implement a digital process for the City to collect, explore and evaluate creative ideas and improvements from employees and residents.
- 4) City Hall to Go: CoSA Innovation-led with collaboration from various City departments, the project will identify when and where department outreach/intake efforts overlap and align those efforts in a mobile format that will deliver them at a time and place that is convenient for all, especially low-income and harder-to-reach populations.
- 5) ActiveVision: SwRI-led with Transportation and Capital Improvements Department, this project will apply artificial intelligence to the City’s existing traffic camera feeds to provide automatic, real-time alerts to City staff when traffic anomalies are detected and need to be addressed.
- 6) R&D program structure: CoSA Innovation-led with advisement from SwRI, USAA UTSA. This initiative will utilize five R&D projects, and expertise from SwRI, USAA and UTSA, to inform the establishment of a structured, institutionalized R&D program for the City of San Antonio.

The R&D collaborators signed a Memorandum of Understanding effective January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. City staff will present their plans to City Council on January 28<sup>th</sup> at the Innovation & Technology Council Committee and will provide a briefing to the full City Council at its February 12<sup>th</sup> B-Session.

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*San Antonio is a global city with a dynamic economy and workforce, a deep cultural heritage and diverse communities that are resilient and welcoming. It is one of the strongest fiscally managed cities in the country, nurturing entrepreneurship, encouraging investment and funding infrastructure. America's seventh-largest city offers a vibrant business climate and growth opportunities in bioscience, financial services, aerospace, cybersecurity, energy, transportation, manufacturing and healthcare. In 2015, UNESCO designated San Antonio's 18th century Spanish colonial missions as a World Heritage Site – the first in Texas. Proudly called Military City, USA®, San Antonio is home to one of the largest populations of active duty military, veterans and crucial military commands. For more information, visit [www.sanantonio.gov](http://www.sanantonio.gov).*